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Ukraine is a tragedy – Putin

The responsibility for continued hostilities between Moscow and Kiev lies first and foremost with Western Europe, the Russian president has said

Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers a speech during a plenary session 'The Polycentric World: Instructions for Use' of the Valdai International Discussion Club in Sochi, Krasnodar region, Russia. © Sputnik / Grigory Sysoev

Moscow sees the Ukraine crisis as a *"tragedy"* that could have been prevented, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said during his address to the Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi on Thursday.

The president stressed that if NATO hadn't continued its eastward expansion to Russia's borders, the Ukraine conflict would have been avoided. He insisted that the blame for the fact that the hostilities between Moscow and Kiev are ongoing lies first and foremost on Western Europe.

"The Ukraine tragedy is painful for both Ukrainians and Russians. It's painful for all of us," Putin said.

He also accused Western Europe of continuing to *"whip up hysteria that war with the Russians is supposedly on the doorstep"* and condemned rampant militarization on the continent. Putin warned that Russia would eventually be forced to respond to such aggressive steps.

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